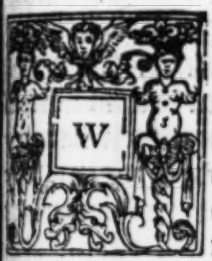
¶ A Letter ſent by the Maydens of London, to the vertuous Patrones & Miſtreſſes *of the ſame, in the de-* ſenſe of their lawfull Libertie.

Anſwering the Very Pæting by vs Roſe, Iane, Rachell, Sara, Philumiás and Dorothie.

¶ Imprinted at London by Henry Binneman, for Thomas Hacket.

Anno. 1567.

To the right wise, sober, and discrete Matrons, and Mistresses of London, the Maidens of the same Citie send greeting.



WE were in a very euill case, and ryght good cause had we to dread and to dispaire of oure well doings, (moste worthie Matrones & Mistresses) wer it not that we knew ye to be such as are not moued wyth euery wynde, nor such as hang vpon the blastes of euery mans mouth: for else what great mischiefe and trouble those fonde and malicious Dialogues of The Mery meting of Maydens in London, might haue bred vs sicly girles, what disquietnesse of minde and body also to you myghte therby haue growne (if ye wer as light of credite, as the Author is of Judgement) your wisedomes well wote, and we are not to learne. For if at his false

surmise and suggestion, vpon his bare word and letter, or vpon his vniust assertion without proofe, ye shoulde haue forthwith cõdemned vs of such things as he layeth vnto our charges (& whereunto we pleade not guiltie) and thereby also should haue gone about immediately to abridge vs of our lawful libertie, such an inconuenience might haue arysen and growne therby, that in a verie shorte time and space, ye shoulde haue gotten very fewe or no seruants at all, when such as are borne in the countrey shoulde chose rather to tarie at home, and remaine there to take paines for a small stipend or wages with libertie: and such as are Citizens borne, shoulde repaire also to the coũtrey, or to other Cities where they might be free, than to abide as slaues and bondewomen in London, *Libertas namque potior metallis.* Then, the lesse inured and accustomed that euery matron and mistresse were to toyle and drudge, the greater misse shoulde she haue of hir mayde, the lesse

paines

paines that the mistresse were able to take, the more neede should she haue of her handmaid or seruant. For as there are diuers and sundry membres in the body, the least whereof the body may not well want or spare: and when any one of them is hurt or greued, ỹ whole body suffreth smart therfore: Euen so are we to you (good Mistresses) such as stande you in more steade, than some of the membres stande the body in, yea in as much steade we alone doe stande you in, as diuers membres of the body altogether do stande the body in. For one might liue although he lacked one of his eyes, one of his hands, one of his legs, and might also see, or handle any thing, and walke abrode. But ye (good Patrones and Mystresses) withoute your maides what coulde ye doe when now ye are paste paines taking youre selues, some by reson of age waxen vnweldie, some by the grossenesse of your bodies, some by lack of bringing vp in paines taking, and som for sundry and

diuers other reasonable respects & ca
ses, we are to you very eyes, hãds, fete
& altogether. If ye byd vs go, we run, &
are as loth in any thing to offẽd you, as
ye are to be grieued. And wherein from
time to time we know ẏ we may plea-
sure you, as redy we are to offer it, as
ye are to demaũd it, as redy to obey you
as yet to commaund vs. The moze & the
greater that your businesse are (right
worthie Matrones) and the lesse able
that ye your selues are to accomplishe
them, the moze merite those your poze
maidens, that take that toyle foz you,
whom it were to much against reason,
to intreate euill, when they haue done
their duties to vse as slaues oz bonde-
women, being frę borne, and not ra-
ther to cherishe them, and make muche
of them when they take intollerable
paines foz a trifle. How much against
al reason were it, so straightly to deale
with vs, and so straitely to vse vs, that
after all the toile we take in the whole
wæke, we might not enioye a piece of
the

the holyday, to refresh our spirites, and to rest our wearied bones? Would ye not thinke him mad that would euery day in the yeare iourney his horse? or that would course with his greyhound whilest his tayle will hang on? (as the Prouerbe is) or ouerflye his Hauke. If such good hede be taken in guiding of beasts, vermins and foules, that they be not with too much labour spilt and marde: How much more hede ought there to be taken, that christian people and reasonable creatures be not therwith oppressed? *Quod caret alternam requiem durabile non est.* How much more circumspect ought we to be, that suche whose seruices we may not wel want, may be made of & cherished? partly for ỳ preseruation of their helth partly also that they being with honeste exercises and pastimes refreshed, may ỳ better fal to their labor again, after that they haue a little while rested? How much more ought they to be tendred, that cã by no meanes be separat? For as ye are they

they that care & prouide for our meat, drinke and wages, ſo we are they that labor and take paines for you: ſo that your care for vs, and our labor for you is ſo requiſite, that they can not be ſeparated: ſo nedeful that they may not be ſeuered.

And where the Author doth ſo much inuey againſt our ouermuche libertie, in that he wryteth that hée knoweth not, and medleth of that that he hath no ſkill off. For, all the wéeke dayes we are continually buſied: and the Author findeth faulte but for the Holiday: the forenoone wherof we ſpend at Church, or about neceſſarie buſineſſe at home: and ſo muche time haue we not in the after noone, that we can farre ſtray abrode, ſith commõly they ring the firſt peale to Euẽſong before that we haue waſhed vp halfe our diſhes. Then muſt we either to Church againe, or tary at home to dreſſe your ſuppers, for fewe commonly vſe to faſt on Sundayes or Holy dayes, in London eſpecially: No

not

not the very Author of the Merie méeting of maidens himselfe, who would not be very mery, if he were therto cõstrained: as like a Diuine as he taketh vpon him to teache and preache of that that he hath nothing to do with, of thẽ that little set by it, and to them that do but laugh at it.

And where he alleageth that we doe mispend our time in the Church in gazing and loking about vs, and that our comming thither is not to pray: surely he himself was not very well occupied in the Church, and prayed but litle (as it seemeth) when he stode gazing & loking about him at vs, to marke what we didde. And for oure thoughtes, sith they are so priuie, that were he as cunning as the Diuell, yet coulde he not knowe them, sithe God alone hathe that priueledge of all others, to know the thoughts of men, wemen, childzen, and of euery liuing creature, so that he may as well lie, as say true herein, as it is mozе likely that he doth: therefoze

ye

ye may credite him as ye ſhal ſée cauſe: we dare take it vpon our conſciences yͤ if ye beleue it not at all, it ſhal be nothing at al preiudicial to you, nor your lacke of beléefe therein ſhall any thing hinder your ſaluation. And thus this being well tried & examined, we haue not paſt two houres at the moſt vpon the Holy day for our talkes, métings, drinkings, going to playes and ſporting. &c.

Although his bragging and boaſting title (of his Mery meeting of Maidens, be farre worſe than the worke it ſelfe, where in he hath as it were brought a milnepoſt to a pudding pricke: wherin alſo at the firſt ſight he doeth ſo threaten vs, as though fewe or none of vs were good, yea as though the beſt were too bad, how holily ſoeuer in the end of his worke he excuſeth himſelf, wherin he breaketh our heads, and afterwards giueth vs plaiſters. Yet when he hath ſayd what he can: he can ſhewe no good cauſe why our liberties ſhould be re-

ſtrai-

strained, as he so earnestly desired: and as on the one side the mā of likelihode is yong, and desirous of glory by publishing of somewhat in Print what so euer it were, or else toke paines for ỹ penny, thereto enforced by penury, so surely hath he chosen the most vnfitte matter of al matters to entreat vpon, if we regarded not more what became vs maidens, than measured what hee hath merited & deserued. In which very choise of so many argumēts, he hath no lesse declared his little wit, than he hath vttered his small skill & learning in the hādling of it. For what one wise man will willingly meddle wᵗ a multitude, or contende with a whole company? He forgate certainly the Latine Prouerbe, *Ne Hercules quidem contra duos*, when he recited fiue of vs by name, and vnder those fiue names aboue fiue thousand of vs. O madde man that he was: Doth a Phisitian winne renoume by killing or by curing his pacients? Wotteth he not that ỹ name of a pro-

mo-

mater is odious? O moſt worthy Orator what ſo euer he was, that for any cauſe could not be compelled to accuſe any, but willingly for a trifle wold defend many. But ſurely either was this author not wel aduiſed, or elſe remembred he not this Prouerbe: *Ne ſutor vltra crepidam*, when he toke vpon him, that that nothing at al appertained vnto him. For ſith Diuinitie is not his profeſſion, nor that he is admitted to ỹ office of the miniſtery, nor to the order of Preaching, he might well haue left that office of correcting and reforming of the maners of others to ỹ preachers, & for his owne part farre better might he haue folowed that Counſell of holy S. Auguſtine, who ſaith: *Medice primum teipſum cura*. After his ſerious ſtudy he wold haue found out ſome honeſter recreation, and medled in maters meter for his vocation, wherein alſo his ſkill and knowledge had bene greater: and in that the common law is his ſtudie & profeſſion, he might farre better haue

wit-

written of some Writte, as *Supersedeas*, or *Corpus cum causa*, or *De Idiota inquirenda*, or of some suche like argument, a great deale more mete for him, and agreeable for his grauitie, being incident and appertinēt to his science, more correspōdent also to his faculties, and might well haue letten vs poore maidens alone, and not haue cōbred his *capax* wō our causes, nor haue intermedled in our libertie. He might haue spent his time farre better, than in a common consequent vpon so fond an argument. Wherin, if according to his promise he proceede and make you laugh, we wil borow a litle of the law, and laugh at him for company, we wil lay apart, and part of our bashfulnesse, and deale merily with a mery man in mēter, *vt impleatur Prouerbium, Qui moccat moccabitur.* But euen as he was at ỹ first procured by pouertie to make any thing merily for money, so nowe by chance Idiot it may fal forth, that moued with melācholy, he wil proceede fran-

frantikely (which we are as loth ſhold chaunce, as he ſhould be to procure it.) We muſt thē of neceſſitie addreſſe our ſelues to Replie in defenſe of our liberty, and eke of our honeſty, leaſt our ſilēce yeld vs gilty. It is alſo right expedient that ſo it ſhould be, *vt ſi quam male dicendo voluptatem ceperit, eam male audiendo amittat.*

He thought perhaps to haue diſcreditedvs maruelouſly when he hath nowe moſt of al hurt himſelf, & hindred vs very lytle or nothing. For whereas the cheefeſt point of a Gentleman is to defende and ſaue harmleſſe to his vttermoſt, the poore and ſilly women when they are wronged and oppreſſed: and many haue thereby onely won them ſelues an immortall fame, ſo hath this mad mery man for his Mery meting of maydens madly made in mery meter, merited only to be mocked and laughed to ſcorne for his labor, and well declared how baſe his byrthe and bringing vp are, and how farre vnlike a Gentleman he is to ſeeke to hurt them whom

whom he ought to helpe: to make so great boast and to bring so small roast, to barke so loude and to byte nothing.
For what be the causes wherefore he wold haue vs restrained of our liberties?
"Forsoth bycause of priuie contracts,
"he wold not haue vs resort to Playes:
"he findeth fault with our great expen-
"ces in banqueting, and accuseth vs
"with pilfering and pycking of meate
"and candels from you for mother B,
"by whom (as he saith) we are boldned
"and encouraged to be stoute and stub-
"borne to you, being alwayes placed by
"them in seruice, if at any time we be
"destitute.

This is the whole summe (good Matrons and mistresses) of all his three Dialogues, sauing that he accuseth Rachel to occupie for hir selfe, which sith she is better able to denie than he to iustifie, there needeth no further ado in that matter. But for the rest, as the priuie contractes especially, surely it is a thing that we do not very well allow, nor yet alto-

gether discommende. Allow it we may not, Condemne it we can not. For as our parentes aduise is alwayes to be asked in the choyce of our husbands, so is it not alwaies to be followed, namely when we can not frame our selues to loue the partie that our parentes haue prouided for vs. Is it not a ruled case in ẏ law, that the Warde for sundry lawful causes may lawfully refuse to marie, when mariage is by his Garden tendred to him? As if his Garden wil marie him to one that is bond, to one that is maymed or dissigured, & such like: how much more may we refuse such olde doting fooles as somtimes ar procured by our parentes to be suters to vs, & haue a thousand worse impedimentes, and nothyng but their goods and money to mary them, no not so much as any one good propertie or qualitie. Lette vs say nothing of their extreme couetousnesse, (*Cum enim omnia vitia in sene senescunt, Auaritia solummodo iuuenescit,*) and diuers other their crooked and crabbed condicions.

What

What great gaine shall a yong mayden haue by matching with any of them, when cõmonly they leaue at their death behinde them many yong children, and litle or nothing to kepe them with? For as they may giue all to their wiues, if they list, so notwithstanding the most honest, lawfull and laudable custome of this most famous Citie to the contrary, they may in their lyfe time by vnconsionable conueyances conuey all from them, if they lyst, as seldom litle they leaue them, in respect of that they deserue, vnlesse it be vpon condition not to mary againe, whilest they liue. Thus haue their poore wiues a very euill recompense for their painfull seruices and diligence, and are put to a very hard choise, eyther to ende their liues with beggery, or being yong and bound from mariage are driuen (the more is the pytie) to liue (as some chanteth) incontinently. And sith loue should be the principall cause in mariage, why shold we be blamed, for chosing wher we most loue and fansie? *Concordia res par-*

na creſcunt, diſcordia maxima dilabun-tur, With concord and good agréement ſmall things encreaſe and war great, with diſcord the greateſt things of all decay and come to naught.

Blame vs not if we wold auoid ſo great inconueniences in the choyſe of them wyth om we muſt ſerue all our lyfe tyme, when no wiſe wench willingly wold be hyred of any for a yeare, without a proffe or time of liking.

The author of ỳ Dialogue ſéemeth to be vnmaried, elſe ſurely ſhold he finde by experience, that all things are almoſt to few to make good agréement to laſt and continue in maried couples. As we are not ſo wynching wood to chooſe boyes or lads that lacke experience and the trade to liue, ſo loth we to be coupled in mariage with ſuch as are to lothſom to looke vpon, *Medium tenuere beati.*

Now in that he findeth fault for our going to plaies and enterludes, your wiſ-domes know well, that in a godly play or enterlude (if it be well made and vnder-ſtan-

ſtanded) may be much learning had: for ſo lively are in them ſet forth the vices and vertues before our eyes, in geſtures and ſpeach, that we can bothe take learning and pleaſure in them. But as for you (right worthy and vertuous Patrons) many reſort to ſermons, alſo not ſo much for your pleaſure (as we take it) as ye do for your good inſtruction and edifying. But herein the author playeth the crafty marchant, by caſting that in our teth, for which he rather myſliketh you that are our miſtreſſes, as who wold ſay he chaſtened the Lyon by the whelpe.

Our great coſtes and charges in good chere and banketting obiected by him againſt vs, ſith he hath named no great deynties, nor yet any great ſhot or reckning, he hath but ſayd a thing that he hath not proued, and ſo haue we the leſſe to ſay therein: and ſo much the rather ſith he him ſelfe againſt his will, or more than he remembreth, hath ſayd metely well for vs in that behalfe. For when Roſe would haue ſent for wyne, Iane

wold not suffer hir, and so had they but bare béere alone that we heard of. Now at that feast or rather a bare béere banket, there were but they two alone, the day was halfe spent and more, for it was well in the after noone. And they are no such quaffers but that a quart would serue them well when they had well dronken before at their dynner. Also a quart of the best béere may be boughte for a peny, so that they two that daye spent eche of them a halfepeny. *Summa totalis* of all that was spent that daie betwene them two at that costely banket, was a peny.

Thus haue you a quicke reckening and a slow payment, a maruellous expence and a mischeuous charge.

For our pilfring and picking from you (our Mistresses) for mother B. &c. If that matter were proued, it could not be well with vs, although that in other things he listed to dally, yet here he iested but homely, in charging vs with flat felony: but his witnesses herein are as far

wiſeke as were his wittes, being dulled and cloyed (as he wrote) with careful and ſerious ſtudie: ye your ſelues are farre better hable to anſwere for vs, and to excuſe vs, than he is hable to accuſe vs. For why? We knowe that we admit no poore women (whome in diſpight he nameth W.) to help vs without your leaue and licence, and not without good cauſe do ye licence them ſometimes to helpe vs: for ſuch do ye hire at your pleaſures for a trifle and for a ſmall time, when ye nede not to be at charges with them all the yere, your prouiſions alſo being dayly made in the ſhambles and markets, we cannot lightly be falſe in robbing of your poudering tubbes: and ye are not ſo ſlender huſwiues, but ye would eaſily eſpie it, and quickely miſſe it: a candles ende is not ſo coſtly, that giuing it to a poore woman to light hir home in a darke night for breaking hir face or ſhinnes, would vndoe you, or greatly hinder you. But he is loth that pouerty ſhould haue any relief at your handes: what thinke ye

would he haue you to giue at your dores in almes to beggers that do nothing for it, when he is thus offended that poore women ſhould haue their hire for their paynes, a few ſcraps of broken breade meete for their toyle and trauaile? For their broking and helping of ſeruantes to ſeruiers is but a tale of a tubbe, ſuch poore peoples credit is not halfe ſo great, that they can ſhew any ſo great a pleaſure, yet ſurely were it not amiſſe, if any ſuch brokers were, then ſeruants ſodenly without warning put out of ſernice, ſhould not by any neceſſitie be conſtrayned to lyue vnhoneſtly. As what would not one do pinched with penury? hunger breketh ſtone walles (as the prouerb is) and why ſhould we be afrayd in honeſt wiſe to complayne to our Maiſters and Miſtreſſes when we finde any thing amiſſe, & deſire their good leaue to depart, when they wil not redreſſe it? What a long tale told he of Dorothy, when ſhe would ſerue no longer? how ſhe was brought before the Aldermans Depu-

tie,

tie, what gained hir matter thereby? Although at the first the officer spake some what stoutly, yet spake he at last full reasonably, and Dorothy might depart lawfully, there was no cause to the contrary. For why? she was by the yere hired, hir time was expired, she ought no longer seruice, she was ouercharged with worke, she had complained and found no amendment, she sought for more easement, she liked not that intertainement. *Sed vt cædas canem, facile reperitur baculus*. The man would fayne haue picked a quarrel, but he fared like wil Sommer: for some by likelihode had angred him, and bicause he coulde not with his staffe reach them, he stroake them that stode nert vnto him: but our trust is that your wisdoms wil way but lightly that that he hath writen ful fondly: and for al his babling (wherin he semeth to delight to heare him selfe to talke) we hope that you wil be as good Mistresses vnto vs as heretofore ye haue been. Accept our seruices as ye finde vs. First trie vs, then

truſt vs: Faire words and gẽtle entreating of vs ſhal do more a gret deale with vs, than a thouſand of threattes & ſtripes, we would not wish you to kepe that ſeruãt ẏ ſerueth you not in a maner aſmuch for your loue as for your money. *Oderint dum metuant*, was the ſaying of a moſte cruel tyrant, of all men to be reiected, of no man to be allowed nor accepted: whẽ al is done, frendeſhip is the ſureſt garde. Let vs haue, we beſech you, our honeſt accuſtomed libertie, ſith ye know no iuſt cauſe to the contrary, intreate vs as we ſhall deſerue, we will deſerue to be well entreated. So much are we buſied this terme by reaſon of the greate reſort that cõmeth to your houſen (good Miſtreſſes) of your kinſfolkes frendes and gueſtes, that for this time we are conſtrayned to make an end. Wherfore we wil commit you all to the holy Tuytion of the moſt bleſſed Trinitie, whom we moſt humbly beſech to ſend vnto you our Miſtreſſes long life, great encreaſe of worſhip, & all felicity: & vnto vs your pore hãd maides

and

and ſeruantes good health, hartes eaſe, and the grace to do our duties to you. Scribled in haſte this xiij. of November. 1567.

Your handmaydens and ſeruants Roſe, Iane, Rachell, Sara, Philumias & Dorothy.

FINIS.

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OMNIA VINCIT AMOR
BE